Queer Heterotopias: Homonormativity and the Future of Queerness

Angela Jones

STRESZCZENIE: Na wstępie autorka powołuje się na Michela Foucaulta, aby przyjrzeć się tworzeniu "odmieńczych heterotopii", tak jak rozumiane są one w niniejszym artykule, czyli jako materialne przestrzenie, w których różne radykalne praktyki nie podlegają regulacji. Są to miejsca, w których aktorzy - czy to akademicy, czy aktywiści - uczestniczą w radykalnej polityce subwersji; w których jednostki starają się zdestabilizować normatywne konfiguracje płci biologicznej, płci kulturowej i seksualności poprzez codzienną eksplorację i eksperymentowanie z kształtowaniem odmieńczej tożsamości. Następnie artykuł analizuje proces stawania się queer w nawiązaniu do myśli Gillesa Deleuze'a. Praktykowanie odmieńczości w codziennym życiu powinno mieć mniej wspólnego z jasno określonym programem politycznym, a więcej z duchową podróżą, jaką podejmują jednostki. Artykuł bada tworzenie odmieńczych heterotopii i krytykuje próby definiowania, redefiniowania i stabilizowania odmieńczości podejmowane przez akademików i pełnych dobrych chęci aktywistów, którzy chcieliby zawłaszczyć, sprecyzować i utrwalić odmieńczą podmiotowość na potrzeby politycznego programu skupionego wokół "walki o swoje prawa". Obecne dyscyplinowanie odmieńczości za pomocą logiki hetero- i homonormatywnej nie sprzyja tworzeniu odmieńczych heterotopii.

Introduction

"Queer" was originally an ambiguous and unfixed category. It was used as an umbrella term that allowed for an actor's agency in crafting new sexual and gender identities (Halperin: 1995, Warner: 1992, Doty: 1993, Hennessy: 1994). However, the term is now linked with identity politics, and is slowly losing its malleability. Queer is becoming a fixed identity, one that some hope will bring about the birth of a queer utopia, or a space where hegemonic heterosexist discourses cease to regulate bodies (Martin: 1994).

Utopias are abstract portraits of ideal or perfect societies that do not exist. Therefore, queer utopias are not possible. However, we are witnessing the birth of what I call queer heterotopias, which are spaces for the "other" to be transgressive, and which are located in real spaces. Drawing from the work of Michel Foucault, I argue that

queer heterotopias are places where individuals can challenge the heteronormative regime and are "free" to perform their gender and sexuality without fear of being qualified, marginalized, or punished.[1] Queer heterotopias are material spaces where radical practices go unregulated. Unlike his previous work on power, in "Of Other Spaces," Foucault (1986) noted that in everyday life escaping repression requires the creation of heterotopic spaces, where individuals can celebrate their difference. Unlike utopias, heterotopic spaces can be created in reality.

Queer heterotopias are sites of empowerment. They always exist in relation to heteronormative spaces and are shaped by them. Queer heterotopias exist in opposition to heteronormative spaces and are spaces where individuals seek to disrupt heterosexist discourses. They are sites where actors, whether academics or activists, engage in what we might call a radical politics of subversion, where individuals attempt to dislocate the normative configurations of sex, gender, and sexuality through daily exploration and experimentation with crafting a queer identity. Queer relates to unspecified social practices that challenge the hegemonic discourses on sex, gender, sexuality. To perform queer through everyday practice means to constantly behave in ways, whether through sexual practice or aesthetically transforming one's body, that defy the conventional sex/gender system. Various rituals, from sex acts, to getting dressed in the morning, to body modifications are ways individuals shape their queerness and in turn create queer heterotopias. The ways in which queerness develops in everyday life must be seen less as a clearly-defined political program and more as a spiritual journey individuals embark on. Their everyday battles shape queer subjectivity and have political consequences. This article explores the development of queer heterotopias, and the problematic way in which queerness is being made, re-made, and fixed by academics and well-meaning activists who would like to appropriate, qualify, and fix queer subjectivity in order to advance a rights-based political program.

Scholars often pin the hopes for the emergence of queer utopias on cyberspace and the hybridization of the body and technology (Featherstone: 1995, Markley: 1996, Pitts: 2000, Haraway: 1991, Stryker & Whittle: 2006). Appearances in cyberspace ostensibly create spaces where symbolic signifiers like sex, gender, race etc. are not aesthetically performed. The techno-body also presents the possibility for the disruption of traditional binary oppositions that allow for the compulsory ordering of bodies. Post-structural feminists and leading queer theorists transformed the way we think about sex, gender, and sexuality by calling for the deconstruction of a subject confined within binary oppositions such as male/female and hetero/homo (Butler: 1990, de Lauretis: 1991, Doty: 1993,

Fuss: 1991, Sedgwick: 1990, Warner: 1993, Weeks: 1985, Seidman: 1994, Haraway: 1991, Martin: 1994). Queerness in cyberspace can bring about this deconstruction. The transgendered techno-body body, for example, is an exciting site of subversion, empowerment, and disruption (Halberstam: 2005, Stryker & Whittle: 2006). Like Donna Haraway, I am mesmerized by the possibilities of science fiction and its presentations of xenogensis and miscegenation (Haraway: 1989).

These theorists have been criticized for their idealism (Foster: 1999, Morton: 1995, Author: Forthcoming). Nonetheless, this is a great starting point for thinking about possibilities for making subversive bodies, and how bodies are inscribed with meaning in social space (Grosz: 1995). Under modern capitalism we have already seen the emergence of cyborg bodies. A critique of the literature on queer utopias, focusing on the emergence of queer heterotopias, requires that we move past the fascination with the cyborg body, particularly as romanticized in the trans-body. This article will investigate the development of trans subjectivities in particular. However unintentionally, trans subjectivities are equated by some queer theorists, activists, and individuals with the ideal performance of queerness. Trans identities are seen as a primary strategy to disrupt or unhinge the sex/gender system. While trans identities most certainly accomplish this, it is dangerous to link queerness with trans identities because they are not the only way to perform queerness. Discursively, academics, who write overwhelmingly about trans identities, are helping to fix the queer identity. There is a lack of literature on how queerness develops in everyday life, and is not just about creating an androgynous gender aesthetic or utilizing technology to transform one's sex and/or gender. These academics are qualifying queerness, and through their discursive attempts at celebrating the subaltern are fixing the term queer.

Queer as a Political Program

The question of how fashioning queer identities will inform political action and social movements is important (Epstein: 1994). The current literature on queer utopias is flawed because it hinges on the creation of fixed identities and subcultures (Berlant & Freeman: 1992, Berlant & Warner: 1998, Halberstam: 2005), which seems to contradict the very purpose of the term queer. Originally, in the 1990s, the term queer was re-appropriated in an effort to disrupt inclusive and essentialist categories like gay and lesbian.[2] It is, however, questionable whether radical sex practices, subversive aesthetic performances, and "alternative lifestyles" are adequate on their own for thinking about the emergence of queerness. It seems the quest for liberation from essentialism is largely failing. Queerness is constantly related to androgyny, transgendered

bodies, and same-sex desire. Because many academics and activists intend to use queer to further a political program, centered on gaining civil rights, they miss queer's utility for individual and human growth. They are working against the term's original power.

Queer heterotopias depend upon the ability of individuals to explore and experiment with their desires. Queer heterotopias are spaces created by individuals where they can explore and publicly present new subjectivities. If the term queer is fixed and becomes a recognized identity, then queer heterotopias are not possible. The romanticism surrounding the queer identity might be dangerous as it ends up constructing another fixed identity that limits agency (Namaste: 1991). The creation of queer heterotopias, through multiple subversive performances of sex, gender, and sexuality vis-a-vis transmogrification of bodies, might push the boundaries of discourse to a point of rupture. Leaving our political hopes and dreams of legitimacy aside, we must explore how queer heterotopias will not just satisfy a political program but a human need. Moreover, as we utilize the queer identity to fashion a new political program for collective action, we end up creating new forms of alienation and bigotry (Gamson: 1995). If we fix queer subjectivity, we begin to alienate those who do not fit the new model or prototype of queerness. A Deleuzian framework will assist us in thinking further about how queerness is developing, and how queer heterotopias can develop.

Gilles Deleuze and Queer Heterotopias

The future of queer theory, queer politics, and queer heterotopias relies on nomadology, or Gilles Deleuze's notion that we are not fixed beings. Deleuze wanted to release Western thought from the chokehold of essentialism. Gilles Deleuze's concept of assemblages helps us think critically about utilizing technology to shape queer practices and subjectivities. "A human body is an assemblage of genetic material, ideas, powers of acting and a relation to other bodies" (Colebrook: 2002). Life is a series of connections; there is no beginning or end that we can somehow uncover through research. Also drawing from Michael Warner (1993) we can only imagine the emergence of queer heterotopias; we cannot configure an exact program or prescription for the future of queerness. While throughout this article I interrogate existing strategies for creating queer heterotopic spaces and present illustrations of possibilities, none of this is meant to prescribe an exact vision of queerness; this article just utilizes a Deleuzian framework to explore its possibilities.

Mimesis, whether through drag or trans identities, is a promising but limited strategy for creating queer heterotopias. It cannot be the only

strategy we use to disrupt essentialist discourses and universalizing subjectivities. This queer identity may limit the ability for subjects to become unfixed, unstable, and malleable, which is the ultimate goal. From Deleuze we draw the question: in what ways can we deterritorialize the body in an effort to break down the subject (Grosz: 1999, Gatens & Lloyd: 1999)? The emergence of assemblages may enable the dismantling what Gilles Delueze called molar categories, or what many call binaries. Can there be bodies without organs, or technologically-constructed bodies within complex systems of desire and power relations that continually produce so much difference that the subject might disappear? Queer heterotopias require a post-human vision that not only seeks to disrupt binaries like, man/woman, male/female, hetero/homo, but also human/non-human (Haraway: 1991). Can there be no stable identity? In order for queer heterotopias to flourish, there must be a move away from stable identities, not towards them, as we are currently witnessing. In Judith Butler's most recent work she says, "it seems crucial to realize that a livable life does require various degrees of stability" (2004: 8). The idea that having a fixed or stable identity is a human need is socially constructed. Our compulsory need to have fixed identities was created by a need for rigid social order. While having fixed subjectivities is a social need, there is no reason to believe that having a stable identity is a human need. To my mind, to flourish, the human condition needs transformation. A transgendered person, a body modifier, etc., do not necessarily desire to be something else; it is the process of transformation that feeds the human soul.

Rethinking the idea of queer heterotopias requires that theories of difference, particularly sexual difference, abandon all fascination with metaphysics (Colebrook: 2000, Braidotti: 2005), give up the notion that political action requires fixed identities. The demise of the compulsory need to order and create any fixed identity/subject/body is the key to developing queer heterotopias further. However, creating queer heterotopias, or spaces where the infinite performances of queerness can exist and flourish free from regulation and marginalization, free from violence, and free to exist and be recognized, cannot be accomplished if we have a fixed notion of what queer bodies look like or how a queer body behaves.

While crafting queer heterotopias will allow for human growth and human satisfaction, it may thwart the political project of many queer activists. If queer is not a fixed identity, it makes collective action harder to organize. Perhaps we must rethink our goals. Is queerness just a political strategy to claim legal recognition? This cannot be the only goal of the queer project. Queer politics cannot just be reduced to the struggle for marriage equality, equal protection laws, the right to legally change your sex, and/or the legal struggle to end the

coercive surgeries of intersexed bodies (just to name a few). This liberalist approach to queer politics is limited. Individuals need social rights as well. The right to exist, to be seen, to be heard, to be accepted as a "viable body," and the right explore our desires, free from fear reprisal is a social right.

By creating queer heterotopias individuals are creating spaces where they force the larger heteronormative society to recognize queer bodies as viable on their own terms.

Recently, Judith Butler astutely noted that what many individuals seem to desire is simply to be a "livable body." She writes:

The task of all these movements seems to me to be about distinguishing among the norms and conventions that permit people to breathe, to desire, to love, and to live, and those norms and conventions that restrict or eviscerate the conditions of life itself...what is most important is to cease legislating for all lives what is livable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unlivable for some (2004:8).

The current queer political project asks for acceptance from the overarching political structure. Queer heterotopias are spaces created by queer individuals that demand recognition. In recognition, I mean that individuals do not ask for legal sanction; they ask only to be recognized as viable bodies. At this point, having spaces where bodies are free to live, literally breathe and walk down the street free from regulation and marginalization is a success. Queer heterotopias are these spaces. Legal sanction or legitimacy is not the only strategy for liberation. For now, if individuals can merely live outside of the binary constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality, they are liberated. Queer heterotopias are spaces where individuals, of infinite genders, sexualities, and radically transformed bodies can, by living, interacting and creating their own spaces, take power and be empowered. They do not need to ask for it

Beyond Mimesis

Mimesis refers to imitation or representation of an already existing form. In the work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno the mimetic capacity of the individual is a strategy for adaptation. Mimesis is then a means by which an actor can blur the binary-subject/object. Difference is created in the process by which individuals imitate something already in existence. Where Adorno draws primarily from a biological model, Michael Taussig applies the mimetic capacity to the social realm. For these authors, mimesis is not just imitation; it always reproduces an other. He defines the "mimetic faculty [as] the nature that culture uses to create second

nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into, and become Other" (Taussig: 1993: xiii). Mimesis is a means by which to experience alterity. A copy can never reproduce the original and can never fully capture the essence or aura (Benjamin: 1969) of the original. Therefore, mimesis always produces an other. If we drew from these authors we could conclude that the development of queer heterotopias depends on the process of othering and the creation of material spaces that celebrate difference. For them, mimesis might be a means by which to achieve this plurality of identities.

Post-structuralist theorists discussed the possibilities of producing ruptures within discourses through the emergence of difference and the multiplication of the "other." For instance, post-structural feminists like Luce Iriggary and Judith Butler both draw on a Lacanian framework that sees the subject as mediated by a linguistic symbolic order, which is conditioned by the compulsory ordering of the body vis-a-vis binary constructions. Butler pays acute attention to the social context which shapes the language, and hence the performance, of gender. In Butler's earlier work, Gender Trouble, (as opposed to her revised ideas in Undoing Gender), the mimetic capacity of the actor can produce subversive performances of gender that push the boundaries of the discourse from within. This mimetic capacity is conditioned by heterosexist discourses, and these performances are not conscious or willful. Butler warns:

To claim that that the subject is itself produced in and as a gendered matrix of relations is not to do away with the subject, but only to ask after the conditions of its emergence and operation. The 'activity' of this gendering cannot, strictly speaking, be a human act or expression, a willful appropriation, and it is certainly not a question of taking on a mask; it is the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, its enabling cultural condition. (Butler: 1993:7)

The strategies we develop to bring about queer heterotopias are not as simple as taking a dress on and off. We must work within the discourses at our disposal; there is no getting outside the matrix of power.

In order to push discourse we will need to move beyond Butler's focus on gender performativity and the discursive realm and place more emphasis on actual bodies (Grosz: 1994). In my view, mimesis, or the replication of already existing gendered subjectivities is a limited strategy for the deconstruction of binaries and creating ruptures in discourse. Individuals can and do create new subjectivities. The more individuals create spaces where they can freely explore and experiment with subjectivity and their bodies, the

more we will see queer heterotopias appear.

Judith Butler invokes important questions about the possibilities for subverting hegemonic discourses through mimesis. She first questions the binary construction of sex and gender.

Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders...there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it (Butler: 1990:6).

The discourses on sex and gender are inextricably linked, and both are social constructions that confine the body within a rigid binary construction - male/female. Butler questions the fixity of these categories. She argues that the pseudo-connection between sex and gender, or the inaccurate notion that sex dictates gender, was created to maintain heteronormative order. Butler argues that all gender is a performance and that there is no "true" essence of sex and/or gender. Therefore, as for Taussig, for Butler mimesis is not mere imitation. One can only imitate that which "really" exists. If the sex/gender system is a social construction then there is no "real" way to "be" male or female. We are sexed and gendered through language.

Consider the medical interpellation which (the recent emergence of the sonogram notwithstanding) shifts an infant from an 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he', and in that naming, the girl is 'girled', brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that 'girling' of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm (Butler: 1993: 7-8).

To my mind, if language is used to construct gendered and sexed bodies, then queerness too are discursively constructed. Currently, some queer activists and academics are using heteronormative language to construct queerness. For example, becoming queer in the United States, might entail that queer parents might (as Butler's example above suggests) name their children Alex, Jordan, or Reily because they are considered gender neutral names. However, some queer parents might claim that naming a child with a penis Mary might have more transformative possibilities. Naming a child with a penis Mary merely reverses the binary opposition and minimally challenges it. Rather than appropriating already existing

names, created within heteronormative discourses, why not then create innovative ways to utilize existing language for describing and transcribing queer bodies? One could argue that actor, Gwenyth Paltrow and singer Chris Martin's decision to name their daughter Apple was transgressive. These examples aim to point out the limitations of what we might call subversive mimesis, or utilizing existing heteronormative standards to attempt to subvert the sex/gender system. Utilizing "ungendered" language to describe bodies may have more transformative power than utilizing a strategy of subversive mimesis.

Discourses on sex and gender are also linked with the discourses on sexuality. Performances of gender are also conditioned by heteronormative discourses that seek to regulate desire.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender and desire (Butler: 1990: 22-3)

Performances of gender also require adherence to the hetero/homo binary. Moreover, gender performances deemed "normal" then require actors to perform sexualities that ostensibly "match" their gender. The construction of masculinity and femininity are linked with desire.

The category of sex is neither invariant nor natural, but is a specifically political use of the category of nature that serves the purposes of reproductive sexuality. In other words, there is no reason to divide up human bodies into male and female sexes except that such a division suits the economics needs of heterosexuality and lends a naturalistic gloss to the institution of heterosexuality (Butler: 1990: 112).

Queer heterotopias are spaces where sex, gender, and sexuality are subverted simultaneously. There may be no way to dismantle the linkages between these categories because one category only reifies the other. Can individuals behave in ways that subvert this multifaceted process? Yes, if in society female masculinity is equated with lesbianism or male femininity equated with being gay, then individuals can craft gendered subjectivities that disrupt this fallacy. For example, the subculture "the Bears," a group of hypermasculine gay men in the United States, have found a way to perform queerness that does not conform to society's expectations.

They tend to have a lot of body hair, facial hair, and adopt a gender aesthetic antithetical to effeminacy. Their adoption of a working class performance of masculinity as means by which to perform their sexuality disrupts the traditional association with effeminacy and gayness. In New York there are growing cohorts of young men who call themselves, "homo-thugs." Like the Bears, this hypermasculine youth subculture aims to demonstrate to society that one can perform queer in a way that does not conform to society's notions of what a gay man looks like. These performances, like drag, attempt to reveal that there is no "true essence" of sexual identity.

Butler posits that the body is constructed by existing gender discourses and therefore our performances of gender are conditioned by these discourses. I argue that the future of queer heterotopias hinges upon the opening of possibilities within discourses that reconfigure the way bodies may perform sex, gender, and sexuality. We might, ultimately, have more agency than Butler's theories allow in radically shaping our bodies. While actors' performances of gender are structured by the larger hegemonic discourse, I believe individuals have more agency than Butler's work suggests. Individuals can utilize these discourses to create new, radical, and subversive performances; they can recreate their identities and subjectivities using the available discourses. These tactics can blur the binary constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality. Butler herself suggests this possibility in her early work:

This text continues, then, as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity (Butler: 1990: 33-4).

What does 'subversive confusion' look like? When any individual utilizes the technologies now at our disposal to transform their body in ways that create confusion when onlookers cannot immediately order these bodies, they are creating subversive confusion. How can individuals make gender trouble? Is subversive mimesis an ideal strategy for developing queer heterotopias further? Are drag queens and drag kings good examples of successful attempts at subversive confusion and gender trouble?

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of

significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance... In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself - as well as its contingency (Butler: 1990: 137).

However, to my mind the parody found in drag shows only minimally pushes discursive boundaries. Because drag performers are fetishized by audiences and seen by eager kibitzers as a parody of a "true" identity, such performances lose their subversive quality and their transformative possibilities. While the avid queer theorist recognizes the irony in this performance, the onlooker generally will not read this performance as subversive. Drag is viewed as mere imitation by heteronormative society and is generally perceived as a spectacle, a comedic performance consumed by cultural tourists. Therefore, drag, a prime example of subversive mimesis is a limited strategy for sustaining queer heterotopias.

Queer heterotopias were formed in opposition to heteronormative spaces we cannot dismiss how the behaviors of queer individuals will be perceived by others in society. Understanding how queer performances will be seen or received by the larger society is important. In order to thwart the negative responses and reactions, which are often violent, from bigoted individuals, carefully anticipating these reactions are crucial. Moreover, the legitimization of queer bodies, the right to exist, is not just a result of queer individuals' public performances. Managing the negative responses from different sources within heteronormative spaces is an important part of queer politics.

Privileging Techno-Bodies

Many scholars suggest that there is transformative power in the mimetic performances of transsexuals and the transgendered community (Stryker & Whittle: 2006, Halberstam: 2005). As Taussig notes, the mimetic faculty always reproduces an other. Therefore, in producing an other, transsexuals push the boundaries of discourse and the binaries of sex, gender, and sexuality. However, while trans bodies do cause "trouble" within the sex/gender system, their strategies of subversive mimesis are not the only way people can develop or behave within queer heterotopias. Trans subjectivities are becoming conflated with queerness and seen as the only strategy to radically unhinge the hegemonic discourses of sex and gender, and hence produce queer heterotopias. Both queer and heteronormative society currently seem to equate queerness with people who fit under the acronym LGBT. If people limit queer to trans and gay identities, they are limiting the power of the term queer. Queer is an unfixed subjectivity, but many, not all academics and activists seem

determined to fix the category to suit their own needs. Unfortunately, the propensity toward conformity may be causing many individuals to seek out a fixed and already established queer identity, rather than exploring their own desires and bodies. Taking our cue from Donna Haraway we can imagine other subjectivities that also cause a breakdown of the sex/gender system.

We can begin to imagine the possibilities for new subjectivities to exist by examining the hybridization of human, animal, and technology. Donna Haraway has opened up possibilities for thinking about subverting binaries and the way traditional binaries are already being broken down.

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. The international women's movements have constructed 'women's experience', as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object. This experience is a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind. Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (Haraway: 1991:149).

We are already becoming cyborgs. Science fiction and modernity have collided. The emergence of the cyborg body is breaking down traditional binary constructions like male/female. Even further, it breaks down important binaries like human/non-human. The cyborg or techno-body opens up the possibilities for asking new questions about subjectivity and destroys essential categories of organization. Perhaps Renee Richard's presence on the tennis court and Oscar Pistorious'[3] sprinting signal the coming of queer heterotopias. They both certainly force a new dialogue within society about the usefulness of traditional binaries. Moreover, as these others emerge and multiply, they force discourse to expand to meet their needs. For example, recently the International Olympic Committee allowed transsexuals to compete in the Olympics. On a micro-level individuals can force society to slowly change merely by behaving "queerly." The hybridization of bodies and technologies forces people to rethink how they understand and perceive human life.

Hybridization produces the multiplication and amplification of difference and identities. The increase in hybridization is linked with the rise of global capitalism and advanced technology (Braidotti:

2002, 2006). The possibilities of the techno-body are tempting. However, it could all too readily become yet another grand narrative where technology will be the weapon of revolution. Moreover, the romanticism of the techno-body is only helping to create yet another fixed identity (to be exploited and marginalized). However, new technologies are a strategy for creating queer heterotopias because new technologies can assist individuals to further develop their own queerness.

The proliferation of multiple queer heterotopias requires that we think through the possibilities of a post-human society. There is no essential subject. The popular tendency born in the radical endeavors of some queer activists and queer academics to fix queerness by culturally marking queerness with androgynous aesthetics and gay and lesbian encounters is slowly creating an essential queer subject. Post-structural feminism already opened the door to rethinking the essentializing of the categories man and woman. Deleuze and Haraway have also opened a door that asks us to imagine the possibility of there being no fixed beings. A future with no fixed subjectivities, spaces where individuals can feel free to explore and experiment with their desires, their bodies, and each other are the basis of queer heterotopias.

Queer As Bodies Without Organs

Queer heterotopias require that we abandon metaphysics. We must "free" our thinking from the confines of essentialism and fixed categorical thinking. We tend to see the world as a set of fixed entities. But there is no fixed plane of existence; information, genetic material, rain, ideas, and blood all flow throughout life, at different speeds, and all affect one another. For Gilles Deleuze we should focus on the effects of the flows of all these diverse entities on bodies. It is in our interactions with other bodies that potential arises for new bodies that Deleuze calls, "bodies without organs." The emergence of queer heterotopias depends on this free flow of entities; entities with no order and no organization. Queer heterotopias are constituted by "bodies without organs." The body without organs "is not at all a notion or a concept but a practice, a set of practices. You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit" (Delueze & Guattari: 1987: 149-50). If we learn anything from Deleuze it is that we will forever perpetually be becoming queer.

Queer heterotopias are spaces characterized by infinite sets of social practices. "The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole" (Deleuze & Guattari: 1987). Then queer heterotopias will exist when we take everything away- all order, all fixed categories. It is thus order that

structures the body and hence it is this order that must cease. There are practices of desire that disrupt this order.

The masochist uses suffering as a way of constituting a body without organs and bringing forth a plane of consistency of desire. That there are other ways, other procedures than masochism, and certainly better ones, is beside the point; it is enough that some find this procedure suitable for them (Deleuze & Guattari: 1987: 155-7).

We cannot give primacy to one form of subversive performance of desire over another. The masochist has the potential of becoming a body without organs. Crucially, the creation of multiple bodies without organs could cause queer heterotopias to flourish. This line of thinking allows us to think in terms of immanence rather than transcendence. Queer heterotopias will require the end of fixed organisms and the free flow of desire. Like the masochist, we can become vessels of free-flowing desire. However, we cannot become fettered to a desire; no individual has one desire. Our desires are multiple; we are polymorphously perverse entities.[4] In addition, desire cannot be seen as only relating to sexuality. Desire is fluid and can relate to a wide range of practices that seek to satisfy immediate wants of the mind and body. However, if an individual allows one desire to consume their time and thoughts, and uses that desire to adopt an identity, they are dangerously fixing their own subjectivity. Instead, if individuals recognize their multiple desires and utilize everyday to explore a new one, they are becoming queer. Becoming queer is not a political process; it is a spiritual journey.

Becoming Queer

How does an individual become queer? Becoming queer is not about crafting a fixed identity or culture. It is about playing with your individual desires and engaging in an ongoing spiritual process of experimentation with those desires. Queer theorists cannot afford to minimize this point. Becoming queer and the queer heterotopia cannot be envisioned as a collective project with programmed visions of how we need to perform queer. While performances of drag may be an experiment in becoming queer for some, and masochism the way for others, every individual will achieve queerness vis-a-vis their own process of becoming. Again, this article does not aim to define queerness on its own terms. The illustrations provided here were meant to just serve as possibilities; the possibilities for creating queer bodies are infinite and a personal everyday adventure. Finally, in recognizing that we are perpetually becoming queer, constantly changing, and constantly experimenting with desire logically means that we cannot have fixed identities. By retaining fixed identities, we shut ourselves off from the constant experimentation that is required for becoming queer, or

a body without organs. Moreover, having fixed identities as the basis for the creation of queer heterotopias will lead to exclusion. We continually witness this problem in praxis; gay men have been kicked out of lesbian turf; trans individuals have been excluded from gay politics. The policing of queerness leads to exclusion.

Creating a queer heterotopia can be more readily envisioned if we think outside of already existing binaries. The mimesis of already existing sex/gender performances (found in drag) and post-human hybridized performances (found in trans identities) are not competing strategies; they are both part of the infinite process of becoming queer. However, we cannot stop at these strategies. Creating queer heterotopias is both an inner and outer battle. Becoming queer is not just about a performance or about sexual acts; it is also a mind-state and an inner battle that occurs within the individual. Queerness is not about being pre-op or post-op; it is not just about same sex relations or membership in LGBTQ organizations. For example, an individual maybe becoming queer by acquiring full body tattoos that transform their body into an other. However, it is the spiritual process of tattooing, the connection between skin, desire, ink, pain, needle, mind frame, machine, power, another body (the artist), and the reactions of people in society that signals their becoming queer. Queerness is found in the repetition of ongoing processes of becoming. The individual must continue these experimentations with alterity in order to continue becoming queer. In this example, one has not become queer once one's body is covered in tattoos. Becoming queer requires an ongoing process of experimentation and interactions with multiple desires with their bodies and their minds.

Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor...and how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to a dominant reality? (Deleuze & Guattari: 1987: 160).

Queer heterotopias are a radical post-human vision where nothing is fixed and there are no boundaries, and no hierarchies. These are spaces with no ordered categories that qualify and rank bodies. This will require the radical transformation of bodies, subversive performances, and transforming our minds, our souls, and our thoughts. It seems that queer theorists and queer utopian hopefuls have pinned their hopes on subjectification. While, I too find the manipulation of the body through a "confused mimesis" (Scheie: 1994) alluring, ultimately, I must wonder if these performances only

reify subjectification. The focal point of queer politics cannot just be the body; queer bodies do not just look queer; these bodies behave queerly. While our bodies are sites of possibilities, we must be careful about naming these performances and reifying the performances into identities. If all queer performances en masse despite their differences constitute queerness then no exclusion is possible.

As new queer subjectivities are crafted, it is likely that under capitalism they will be commodified and exploited; becoming queer then demands constant experimentation, movement, and change. Moving away from fixed identities will then also help thwart to problem of commodification and exploitation. Desire must be freed from the confines of a heteronormative order. Becoming queer means we must see ourselves as free-floating entities of desire. Most importantly, becoming queer entails a constant process of spiritual experimentation. Individuals are increasingly looking for alternative roads to spirituality outside of organized religion. The most interesting aspect of queerness is the internal liberation experienced in this process, not the political emancipation that it seems many queer activists are concerned with. In my view, spirituality relates to introspection and becoming queer provides a rewarding means by which to explore ones desires and their relationship with the external world.

Homonormativity and the Future of Queerness

The major problem that faces those invested in the queer political project is the growing problem of homonormativity. Lisa Duggan vocalized this growing problem within queer politics in her paper, "Feeling Neoliberal: Homonormative Desires, Imperial Desires," delivered at the 2006 conference, Historicism, Homonormativity, and Queer Political Formations. As queer heterotopias develop, they are being stifled by some well-meaning political activists who engage in what we can call a politics of exclusion, as they marginalize those individuals who do not fit into their homonormative standards. As queer politics, particularly in the United States, has become absorbed by the fight for equal marriage, those who do not conform to this type of politics of respectability are being marginalized. The growth of queer heterotopias is being stymied by this strategy. There are many kinds of individuals who reject the hegemonic discourses on sex, gender, and sexuality. Trans identified people, intersexuals, bisexuals, polyamorous couples, just to name a few, are all fighting for the right to be legitimized bodies, and hence find space for the celebration of their queerness. However, often they are alienated from queer politics. This seemingly strategic move is actually counterproductive to the development of queer heterotopias and queer politics in general.

While not en masse, there are many queer theorists and political activists that are engaged in an ongoing process of trying to fix a queer identity through discursive and political campaigns. LGBTQ activists and academics are contesting queerness. A battle is emerging over who is allowed to be queer. Is anyone who rejects compulsory gender identities queer? Are all self-identified gay men and lesbians queer? Can bisexuals be queer? It seems that many are still trapped within the binary frameworks that condition how we understand sex, gender, and sexuality. Many claim to be part of a growing queer movement but then alienate bodies that do not conform to their ideas of what queerness should be. If a sexually "straight" body modifier identifies as queer, would some say the modifier's queerness was negated by their so-called heterosexual desires? I wonder if a heterosexual foot fetishist would be banished from developing queer publics. In many spaces the queerness of these bodies would be contested. I am afraid a growing cohort of activists and queer theorists might be quick to question the authenticity of these self-identified queer people. Queer heterotopias are not characterized by any clearly defined set of practices; the only requirement is that the practices subvert hegemonic discourses that regulate the body, particularly, related to sex, gender, and sexuality. Queer activists are leading people to the wrong "promised land." They are pointing people in the direction of political emancipation in the form of civil rights that only benefit a particular segment of queer people. Instead, developing queer heterotopias should provide a greater sense of legitimacy, power and self-empowerment than the rights-based movement developing in queer politics.

Queer is a set of unidentifiable practices. The beauty of becoming queer, its liberating potential, lies in the fact that it is unidentifiable and not fixed. Becoming queer is a spiritual journey not just a political one, a point all too readily glossed over by some queer theorists and activists. If activists and academics continue to fix and regulate queerness according to heteronormative logic, and in some cases homonormative logic, they will stifle the emergence of new queer heterotopias. The current policing of queerness works against the development of queer heterotopias and spaces for the empowerment and liberation of all those who reject heteronormative standards. In praxis, queer is being fixed and recognized as related to subversive mimetic gender performances, whether in trans identities or androgynous gender aesthetics or as related to same-sex desires. This article aimed to point out the growing problem of policing queerness. However, it was not the intention of the author to then lay out a fixed alternative program to achieve queerness. Rather, queerness was presented here as a constant process of experimentation with our desires. Becoming queer is an individual and everyday spiritual journey and queer

heterotopias are simply spaces where these infinite practices go unregulated and are not marginalized. If queer is being fixed and reduced to identification within the dominant acronym LGBT, then the future development of queer heterotopias is in jeopardy.

Works Cited

- Benjamin, Walter. 1969. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". *Illuminations* . Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.
- Berlant, Lauren & Elizabeth Freeman. 1992. "Queer Nationality". *Boundary 2,* Vol. 19, No. 1, New Americanists 2: National Identities and Postnational Narratives, Spring, pp. 149-180.
- Berlant, Lauren & Michael Warner. 1995 "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X? PMLA. Vol. 110, No. 3, pp. 343-349.
- Berlant, Lauren & Michael Warner. 1998. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry.* Vol. 24, No. 2, Intimacy, Winter, pp. 547-566.
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2002. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming.* Cambridge: Polity Press.
-b. 2005/2006. "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity." *Rhizomes,* 11/12.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing Gender.* New York: Routledge, 2004.
-b. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.
-c. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge.
- Chauncey, George. 1994. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940.* New York: HarperCollins.
- Colebrook, Clare. 2000. "From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Llyod[A12], Grosz, and Gatens". *Hypatia,* 15, pp. 76-93.
- Colebrook, Clare. 2002. *Understanding Deleuze.* Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- De Lauretis, Teresa. 1991. "Queer Theory." *Differences* 3, Summer.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. 1987. *Thousand Plateaus.* Tr. Brian Massoni. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Doty, Alexander. 1993. *Making These Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Epstein, Steven. 1994. "Sociology and the Study of Sexuality." *Sociological Theory.* Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 199-202.
- Featherstone, Mike & Roger Burrows, Eds. 1995. *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment.* California: Sage.
- Foster, Thomas. 1999. "The Rhetoric of Cyberspace: Ideology or Utopia." *Contemporary Literature.* Vol. 40, No. 1, pp.144-160.

- Foucault, Michel. 1977. D *iscipline and punish: The birth of the prison (* A. Sheridan, Trans) New York: Vintage.
-b. 1980. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1. New York: Vintage.
-c. 1986. "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (Spring), 22-27.
- Fuss, Diana. 1991. *Inside/Out.* New York: Routledge.
-b. 1989. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference.* New York: Routledge.
- Gamson, Joshua. 1995. "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma." *Social Problems,* Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 390-407.
- Gatens, Moira and Genevieve Lloyd. 1999. *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* . New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1995. *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
-b. 1994. "Experimental Desire: Rethinking Queer Subjectivity." In Joan Copjec Ed. *Supposing the Subject,* London: Verso.
- Halberstam, Judith. 2005. *In Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives.* New York: New York University Press.
- Halpern, David. 1990. "Homosexuality: A Cultural Construct. An Exchange with Richard Schneider." In *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love.* New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna. 1991. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* . New York; Routledge, pp.149-181.
-b. 1989. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science.* New York: Routledge.
- Hennessy, Rosemary. 1993. "Queer Theory: A Review of the *differences.* Special Issue and Wittig's *The Straight Mind." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society,* 18.
- Irigaray, Luce. 1993. *Toward a Culture of Difference.* Trans. Alison Martin. New York: Routledge.
-b. 1977. *This Sex Which is Not One.* Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Markley, Robert, Ed. 1996. *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents.* Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Martin, Biddy. 1994. "Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias." *Diacritics,* Vol. 24, No. 2/3, Critical Crossings, Summer/Autumn, pp. 104-121.
- Morton, Donald. 1995. "Birth of Cyberqueer". PMLA. Vol. 110, No. 3, May, pp. 369-381.
- Namaste, Ki. 1991. "The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Postructuralism, and the Sociological Approach to Sexuality." *Sociological Theory,* 12, pp. 220-231.
- Pitts, Victoria. 2000. "VISIBLY QUEER: Body Technologies and Sexual Politics."
- *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol. 41 No.3, pp. 443-463
- Scheie, Timothy. 1994. "Body Trouble: Corporeal "Presence" and

Performative Identity in Cixous's and Mnouchkine's "L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs reves." *Theatre Journal.* Vol. 46, No. 1, March, pp.31-44.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosovsky. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Seidman, Steven. 1994. "Queer-Ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory: An Introduction." *Sociological Theory,* Vol. 12, No. 2, July, pp. 166-177.
- Stryker, Susan & Stephen Whittle Eds. 2006. *The Transgender Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge.
- Taussig, Michael. 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses.* New York: Routledge.
- Warner, Michael. 1993. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. 1985. *Sexuality and its Discontents.* New York: Routledge.

---

[1] For Michel Foucault's discussion of heterotopias see his 1967 lecture, "Des Espaces Autres" or "of Other Spaces." Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces," Diacritics 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27. In addition, the reference here to resisting marginalization, qualification, and punishment is to Foucault, Michel. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.) New York: Vintage.

[2] See George Chauncey, Gay New York, for an insightful etymology of the word queer.

[3] Famous athlete/sprinter with two carbon-fiber prosthetic legs.

[4] However, unlike Sigmund Freud, in queer heterotopias the recognition of polymorphously perverse sexuality is not seen as pathology, underdeveloped, and/or unhealthy. Instead of being socialized away from our multiple desires, queer heterotopias nurture these desires.

Angela Jones